

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-08 AID-05 IGA-02
MCE-00 IO-13 DOE-11 SOE-02 /115 W
-----041607 280429Z /14

R 261318Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5410
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 0528

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PN
SUBJECT: ARMS LIMITATION UNDER DECLARATION OF AYACUCHO

REF: STATE 15196

1. PANAMA PERCEIVES NO ARMED THREAT FROM HER IMMEDIATE
NEIGHBORS, AND THUS, THE QUESTION OF AN ARMS RIVALRY HARDLY
APPLIES HERE. HOWEVER, PANAMA DOES ENVISION ITS PARTICIPATION
IN CANAL DEFENSE ONCE THE NEW TREATIES GO INTO EFFECT, AND
IT IS U.S. GOVERNMENT POLICY TO MAKE THAT PARTICIPATION A REALITY.
PANAMA'S UNIQUENESS IN THIS RESPECT MUST BE BORNE IN MIND
AS WE CONSIDER ARMS LIMITATION POLICY AND ARMS SALES.

2. THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES ARE KEYED TO THE QUESTIONS IN
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PARA 4 OF REFTTEL:

A. WE SUSPECT THAT MOST PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS WOULD
NEED TO BE GENTLY REMINDED THAT PANAMA SIGNED THE
DECLARATION. PANAMA IS INTERESTED IN THE MAINTENANCE
OF PEACE IN THE HEMISPHERE, BUT--AT LEAST INsofar AS
THE ANDEAN COUNTRIES ARE CONCERNED--SEES ITS ROLE AS A

MINOR ONE.

B. PANAMA IS AN INVETERATE MEETING-GOER. WE BELIEVE PANAMA WOULD SUPPORT ANY STEPS WHICH COULD EVOKE A CONSENSUS AMONG HER LATIN SISTERS (AND WHICH DID NOT INFRINGE ON HER SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S.), BUT WOULD AVOID TAKING SIDES IF A DIVISION DEVELOPED. WE ALSO DOUBT THAT PANAMA WOULD GET OUT FRONT IN ADVANCING INITIATIVES.

C. PANAMA WOULD PROBABLY FAVOR THE BROADEST POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE REGION. WE DOUBT THAT IT WOULD FAVOR ANY ROLE FOR THE OAS OR OTHER REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

D. PANAMA WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT A CALL FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE. BUT SHE WOULD CAREFULLY SEEK TO DO NOTHING WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE HER SPECIAL DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US RESPECTING THE CANAL. THIS BEING THE CASE, THE UTILITY OF A PANAMANIAN LEADERSHIP ROLE BEFORE A CONSENSUS JELLED MIGHT BE QUESTIONABLE.

E. PANAMA ENVISIONS THE US AS THE SOURCE OF AN ARMS CAPABILITY FOR CANAL AND NATIONAL DEFENSE. SHE WILL SEEK TO PROTECT THIS INTEREST, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF THE AYACUCHO DECLARATION OR ANY OTHER ARMS
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LIMITATION MEASURE. BEYOND THIS, WE DOUBT THAT PANAMA WOULD WELCOME ANY ACTIVE US ROLE APART FROM PERIODIC EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT FOR THE DECLARATION OR OTHER AGREED LATIN INITIATIVES AND QUIET DIPLOMATIC URGINGS OF RESTRAINT. PANAMA REMAINS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO THE US URGING LATIN COUNTRIES TO DO WHAT THE US THINKS BEST FOR THEM, AND WE BELIEVE SHE WOULD NOT WELCOME AN ACTIVE, FORWARD POLICY OR PUBLIC INITIATIVES ON THIS SUBJECT ORIGINATING IN WASHINGTON.

JORDEN

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